Finding and Applying for Government Jobs

Do you know what to expect when applying for federal jobs? Navigating the federal job search can be very time-consuming and confusing; however, with the right tools and steps the process can run very smoothly. Here are ten steps to land a federal job, which results in good pay, benefits, stability, and career growth. Any student or graduate may apply for a federal job or internship, but preparation is key!

**Step 1: Network**- They cannot hire you if they do not know who you are. Start talking to friends and family who may have contacts in the federal government. Furthermore, contact individuals who hold federal jobs and ask to conduct an informational interview with them.

**Step 2: Find Your Agency and Job Title**- Know what job titles are correct for you. There are approximately 75 majors matching 450 job titles and agencies.

**Step 3: Look for Openings**- A federal internship can be your ticket to a federal career. Find professional and internship opportunities at: www.usajobs.gov/studentsandgrads/

**Step 4: Understanding Federal Jobs-Target Your Salary and Grade**- The federal civil service has different grading and pay structures for its professional and trade workforces. It is important for you to know what categories you fall into when applying for jobs. For current pay scale information visit: www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages

**Step 5: Find Vacancy Announcements**- Visit the Riley Guide for a comprehensive list of government websites to research and locate positions at www.rileyguide.com/gov.html#Fed

**Step 6: Write Your Federal Resume**- Your federal resume is your federal application. This is the most important document you will write and submit for a federal job. Also, beware that a federal resume is not the same as a private industry resume. Related information and samples can be found at http://gogovernment.org/how_to_apply/write_your_federal_resume/create_your_resume.php. Always use the resume builder at USAJOBS.gov to ensure you are including all the necessary information.

**Step 7: Write Your Cover Letter**- Cover letters should be limited to one page, should be well written and express your appreciation for a review of your resume.

**Step 8: Apply for Jobs**- There are many ways to apply for federal jobs; therefore, it is imperative that you follow the directions of each individual position.

**Step 9: Follow-Up on Your Application**- Asking questions, gaining information, developing relationships, and becoming known are a helpful part of the application process.

**Step 10: Interview for the Job**- In the federal market, your interview could be in person, before a panel, or over the phone. Behavioral based interviews (i.e., tell me about a time when...) are popular because past performance predicts future performance. To learn more about this interviewing style and review a list of sample questions you may reference UW-River Falls Career Services Interviewing Techniques handout.

Adapted from:
Troutman, K., & Troutman E. (2004). The student’s federal career guide: 10 steps to find and win top government jobs and internships. Baltimore, MD. The Resume Place, Inc.
Seven Subjects Your Federal Resume Must Cover

A federal resume is simply a resume that is formatted to meet the needs of federal job openings. When applying for a federal job, more information is required than when applying for a job in the private sector. When applying for a federal job, a resume must contain specific information if the applicant is to be considered for the job. A resume that lacks the required information or formatting will be automatically disqualified. Always use the resume builder at USAJOBS.gov to ensure you are including all the necessary information.

1. **Personal Information**- Full name, mailing address (with ZIP Code), e-mail address, and day and evening phone numbers (with area codes), veterans’ preference reinstatement eligibility, highest federal civilian grade held.

2. **Job Information**- Below your personal information, the federal resume must list identifying information about the job you are applying for, including the title, series, grade and job announcement number.

3. **Experience**- The next section of the federal resume lists the positions you have held chronologically, with the most recent listed first. In addition to the information you would provide in a regular resume, such as the employer’s name (in bold), address, position, and dates the position was held, each entry will need to include your supervisor’s name and contact information, whether you consent to your supervisor being contacted, your salary at the position, and the average number of hours you worked each week.

   After this information, a federal resume should follow with a brief summary of the job, followed by the duties you performed at the position. For each position, an employer expects to see between four and eight duties listed in a bulleted format, with each bullet being approximately four to six lines long. Due to these expectations of length, the "Professional Accomplishments" section of a federal resume is considerably longer than the corresponding section in a basic resume.

4. **Education**- The education section of a federal resume should list your degrees in chronological order, with the most recent appearing first. Each listing should contain the year the degree was received, the type of degree, the name of the school and the city, state, and zip code where the school is located. Read the job announcement carefully to determine if you should include your college transcript with your application package.

5. **Training**- As in previous sections, training programs you have participated in should be listed in chronological order, with the most recent appearing first. Include the year you completed the program and the program title.

6. **Other Qualifications**- If you include any of the following sections, remember to organize the qualifications in each section in chronological order, with the most recent listed first.
   1. **Awards**- Include the year and a brief description of each professional award you have received.
   2. **Certifications**- Include the year and a brief description of each certification or license that you currently hold. Do not list expired certifications or licenses.
   3. **Publications**- List the publications you have contributed to, using a standard bibliography format such as MLA.
   4. **Presentations**- List the title of each presentation you have contributed to, who you made the presentation to, where the presentation was made and the year it was made.